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TO AN IONIAN BOY.

BY GEORGE EDWARD WOODBERRY.

Boy of Mitylene! thou
Of the immortal foot and brow,
Sailing o'er the harbor-sea
In my boat that hideth thee,
Fleeing from the Turkish power
That defiles thine Asian bower,
Seeking that far western shore,
Where thy hopes have gone before
Even with thy childish years
Through heavy toil and orphan tears!—
Thou, whose eyes of wonder see
The American in me;
Confident to take my hand
As an earnest of the land
That shall mother thee and thine,
Our common mother, thine and mine!
I wonder at thy courage, child,
Venturing the unknown wild;
The ticket, hidden in thy sole,
Thy anchor where the great seas roll;
The White Star, pinned within thy shirt
Thy only talisman from hurt;
Earth's and ocean's waif thou art!
Waif of God! brave is thy heart!

Three hundred years have passed away
Since upon the Devon bay
Rowed the English emigrant
From whose loins my line I vaunt.

Centuries three their leaves have shed
Since on the rock he made his bed,
And helped to build with axe and book
The land to which all nations look.
Generations nine have wrought
To save and better what he brought;
Each, in turn, on land and sea,
Toiling for the next to be.
Lo, the forest fell like wheat;
Cities blossomed round their feet;
Came war, came peace, came war again;
And now 'twas muscle, now 'twas brain;
And now 'twas gold, and now 'twas blood;
All things tried them,—firm they stood;
And the land from sea to sea
Spread, and was filled with liberty;
And serving mankind more and more
The race found sweetness at the core,—
A hand of welcome for all men,
And free to all the book, the pen.

So grew the world my boyhood trod,
Thy home to be, thy sky, thy sod,
And climbed Time's zodiac to shed
Heaven's horn of blessing on thy head.
To this end my fathers toiled;
Take thou the heritage unsoiled,—
Years of ever milder power,
Years of ever wealthier dower;
Make free to all the tool, the soil,—
So shalt thou share the mighty toil!
For now full circuit comes the wheel;
The land a newer blood doth feel,
Thine and others; take thy turn,
And with the new world's passion burn!
Unto thee we give the state,
Rich and glorious, free and great;
To the old blood I belong;
Swan-like dies it in my song;

And all that was of life and love,
Behold I am the fruit thereof,—
Speeding on the ocean track,
To the old world turning back,
And now unto thy land I come
As the spirit travels home.

When again three hundred years
Have torn their way through blood and tears
(For this old world will not change,
Howsoe'er men roam and range),
Some boy beautiful with grace
Dropt from thy vanished form and face,
Shall proudly trace his humble line
To Lesbos, and to thee and thine.
Over ocean will he come,
Seeking the ancestral home,
Where freedom's war-cry with fierce clang
First against the tyrant rang,
Where Sappho loved, Alcæus sang.
Will he look on sea and sun,
On isle and mount, as I have done,—
Youngest born of time's last race,
On his knees lay down his face,
Mourning in his lonely mind,
Finding what he weeps to find?—
The old forms gone from grove and hill,
The armor rust, the music still;
The gods of Greece long overthrown,
The temples razed, the statues down;
Scant relics of the brain and hand
That for the soul all beauty planned!
Ah, not for this his tears shall roll,
For plinth and coin, for bust and scroll;
He weeps the ruin of the soul.

O City of the violet crown!

O race familiar with the god!

O lyric isles! O civic town!

The soul's first home was this dear sod!

O Greece, when first the race began
To know itself, and reason clear,
Thou the Creator wast of man!
Thou didst abolish human fear!
And still from thee he takes the best
That his dark spirit can enjoy;—
Because Greece held thee to her breast,
Therefore I love thee, wandering boy!
Nothing in all the world so sweet
As was the message of her feet;
Nothing in all the world so dear
As now her human hopes appear;
Nothing in all the world so wise
As was the bright death in her eyes;
O wisest, dearest, sweetest far,
In love and beauty, sport and war!
Then shall that far American,
Who out of thee shall be made man,
Looking on plain and sea and sky,
Unto his gods lift up his cry:—
“O Land of Promise in the west,
So to the shades go thou not down!
Nor with great Athens take thy rest,
My country of the heavenly crown!”

Fair befall thee, tender child!
Seek thou my home; grow sweet, grow mild!
And fair befall thy race to be,—
Fairer than hath fallen to me!

GEORGE EDWARD WOODBERRY.